

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Community Groups Host Town Hall Meetings
to Educate on Underage Drinking**

Hagåtña, Guam – April is National Alcohol Awareness Month. In an effort to raise the community's awareness about alcohol use and abuse, and strategies to prevent underage drinking on Guam, Southern Christian Academy, St. Jude Thaddeus Church confirmation class, Astumbo Middle School Parent Teacher Organization, UOG Student Health Services Office and Youth for Youth LIVE! Guam will be conducting town hall meetings throughout this month.

Underage drinking is a major public health concern. According to the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than one of every four individuals age 12 to 20 years old is a current alcohol drinker. Guam's rate on alcohol consumption among those underage are very similar to the national statistics. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS) conducted by the Guam Department of Education indicates 1 in 4 high school students is a current alcohol drinker, having had at least 1 alcoholic drink in the past 30 days, and 13.6% of these students went binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row, or within a couple of hours) in the past 30 days.

"Guam is moving on a positive path," shares Audrey Topasna, Underage Drinking Prevention Coordinator at DMHSA. In 2010, Guam's minimum legal drinking age was increased from 18 to 21 years of age. "At this point we must now ensure that Guam's laws regarding underage drinking and alcohol abuse are enforced," she adds. She points out that *enforcement* does not just include law enforcement officers, but calls upon families to take personal responsibility for requiring zero tolerance for underage drinking and alcohol abuse among adults. She explains: "It is our culture – to protect our children; this includes protection from alcohol use and abuse – this should be an influence that starts at home. We should use our strong family ties in guiding our children and family members to choosing an alcohol-free lifestyle."

Town Hall Meetings are a national trend where community members are directly involved in preventing underage drinking. This movement of education, advocacy and action mobilizes all sectors of the community in alcohol abuse prevention.

Guam's series of five town hall meetings are supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), with the guidance of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse – Prevention and Training Branch (DMHSA-PEACE office). Considering their audience base, these community groups were selected to conduct the meetings at the following days and venue:

Community Group	Schedule	Location	Contact Person
Southern Christian Academy	4/13/12 6PM	School grounds	Andresina McManus 565-7020
St. Jude CCD Confirmation Class	4/15/12 9AM	Sinajana Senior Citizen Center	Rebecca Respicio 735-5030
Astumbo Elementary School	4/21/12 10AM – 2PM	Astumbo Gym	Michelle Sasamoto 477-2304
Youth for Youth LIVE! Guam	4/27/12 9AM – 10AM	Hyatt Regency Guam	Gayle Osborn 477-8861
UOG Student Health Services Office	4/28/12 5pm – 11pm	UOG lawn (in front of RFK Library)	Danize Concepcion 735-2225

Guam's youth and adults are encouraged to attend. For more information and to confirm the dates, times and location please contact the persons-in-charge listed above or the DMHSA – PEACE office at 477-9079 ~ 83.

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